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Report of the Human Rights Council

Promotion and protection of human rights

Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of eighteen members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 7 May 2009 from the Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

The Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and has the honour to request that the attached aide-mémoire in support of the candidacy of Cuba for membership in the Human Rights Council for the period 2009-2012 be issued and circulated as a document of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session under agenda items 58, 64 and 104 (c).

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Annex to the note verbale dated 7 May 2009 from the Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

Aide-mémoire

The Government of Cuba attaches the greatest importance to international cooperation for the promotion and protection of human rights within the United Nations and, to that end, aspires to be re-elected to the Human Rights Council.

Cuba participated in an active and constructive manner in the negotiations that led to the establishment of the Human Rights Council as well as in the process of the institutional building of that body. The Cuban delegation submitted, both in its national capacity and as Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, various proposals aimed at ensuring that the Council would serve the genuine promotion of dialogue and international cooperation in the field of human rights, preventing the harmful practices of confrontation and political manipulation, which undermined the very existence of the Commission on Human Rights, from being enthroned in its work.

Cuba remains committed to facilitating the consideration of the just historical demands of the peoples of the South and the large majority of the entire planet, to issues such as the effective realization of the right to development, combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, and to ensuring full respect for the principles of universality, indivisibility, objectivity and non-selectivity in strengthening coope.ation in the area of human rights.

Cuba reaffirms its determination to continue working tirelessly in attaining the common goal of the enjoyment of all human rights by all persons and all nations in the world on the basis of respect for the Charter of the United Nations, the internationally agreed human rights instruments and the Vienna Declaration and Plan of Action. Cuba reiterates its commitment to international cooperation in the promotion and protection of human rights.

Cuba signed the International Covenants on Human Rights in February 2008 and appeared for the consideration of its report before the Universal Periodic Review mechanism in the Human Rights Council on 5 February 2009.

In May 2006, Cuba was elected as a founding member of the Human Rights Council for the period 2006-2009. As we expected, these three years as a member have had a very positive impact not only on the Cuban people, but also on the rest of the international community. In the Council, we have shared our experience and have continued searching for effective responses to the common aspirations of all the peoples of the world.

Cuban women and men have made significant progress in the enjoyment of all their human rights. Whether in the area of economic, social and cultural rights, the field of civil and political rights, or in the realization of the so-called third-generation or solidarity rights, the Cuban people can show the world its achievements, with profound modesty, but with full satisfaction and pride.

If we had to mention only one — the most important attribute and right that the Cuban people have achieved, we would have to refer, without any doubt, to the full exercise of their right to self-determination, facing the grave obstacles and threats resulting from the unilateral policy of hostility, acts of aggression and the embargo imposed by the super-Power.

Cuba's important achievements in such areas as health, education, scientific and technical research, culture and sports are known internationally. However, what has been hidden or distorted is the fact that all this has been possible precisely because the Cuban people are the masters of their political fate and the country's resources, exercise the fullest power and control over the country's life, and participate actively in the effective system of democracy that they designed and approved in a universal plebiscite.

Many of the peoples of the world know very well the nobility of ideals that sustains the conduct of the Cuban people in their international activities. Several of them directly benefited from the selfless and permanent commitment of Cubans to the advancement of human rights for all, throughout the world. Tens of thousands of Cubans shared the fate of the millions of brothers and sisters in the struggles against colonialism and apartheid. Today, there are 47,000 Cuban cooperation workers in the remotest villages, mountains and hard-to-reach places in 108 nations, sharing Cuba's achievements in the fields of health care and education with those peoples.

Cuba has a long record of international cooperation in the area of human rights, demonstrating through concrete acts its unequivocal willingness to engage in frank and open dialogue. Our country has ratified a considerable number of international human rights instruments. Cuba is a State party to 42 of the most important treaties in this area. On 2 February 2009, it ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, thus reaffirming Cuba's commitment to the rights protected by this instrument and validating the fact that in the last 50 years there has not even been a single disappeared or tortured person and not one extrajudicial execution in Cuba.

Cuba recently submitted its reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and is working on the report for the Committee against Torture, which must be ready for submission by the end of the first half of this year. All this is an expression of the country's will to seriously carry out the obligations undertaken as part of its sovereign decision to become a State party to these important international human rights instruments.

Cuba was one of the first countries to be visited by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights barely one year after this post was established. It also hosted visiting missions of several thematic procedures of the Commission, and, in October 2007, it received the Special Rapporteur on the right to food. Also, as part of this commitment to cooperate with the universal, non-discriminatory, non-selective and non-politicized mechanisms in the field of human rights, the Cuban Government will extend an invitation to the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Mr. Manfred Novak, to visit the country this year.

Cuba reiterates its readiness to continue inviting other special procedures of the Human Rights Council to visit the country, in accordance with new conditions and consistent with the Cuban Government's tradition of cooperation over many years.

Furthermore, the country systematically provides all the necessary information in response to requests of the Council's special procedures.

With its re-election to the Human Rights Council, Cuba seeks to continue to contribute in a decisive manner to consolidating an approach based on cooperation and constructive dialogue in the work of the United Nations human rights machinery.

If re-elected to the Human Rights Council, Cuba will continue to promote within the Council its traditional initiatives on such vital issues as the right to food, the promotion of cultural rights and respect for cultural diversity as well as the promotion of peace as an essential requirement for the enjoyment of all human rights. Cuba will also continue to work on the progressive development of the third-generation rights, particularly that of international solidarity.